

# **LAWS --- WHO NEEDS THEM?**

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*Appropriate for grades 7-9.*

**OVERVIEW:** Why do we have laws? The kids ask why we need rules at school, for a club, in the cafeteria, etc. The belief is that we do not need them; the rules are just there and must be followed. The kids cannot conceptualize that we actually need them.

**PURPOSE:** To assist the student with gaining an understanding as to why laws/rules are needed.

**OBJECTIVES:** Student will be able to describe orally or in writing:

1. How rules/laws are involved in our daily lives.
2. What types of decisions must be made in order to solve problems facing our society.
3. How they can have input into the forming of new laws to solve problems evident in their worlds.

## **ACTIVITIES:**

### **Activity #1**

### **MIND WALK**

**Purpose:** May be used to introduce law studies in the classroom and to illustrate the pervasiveness of law, that law is both civil and criminal, and the positive nature of law (i.e., most laws are protective, not punitive).

**Materials:** The following handout may be duplicated and handed out for class use, if desired, or a transparency could be made to be used as a whole class activity.

**Method:** Describe a typical activity on an ordinary day or tell a story about an event or incident. Tell students to stop the story any time they feel a law affects the particular activity. If a student feels a law does affect the activity, ask how.

**Example:** My name is John/Suzy. I live at 1014 Wilson Boulevard. This morning I awoke up at 7:00 a.m. I got up, washed my face, dressed, ate breakfast, read the paper, and drove to work.

**Discussion:** The first time you tell the story the students may not see many things with legal impact. At this point a few questions might help: "How are time

zones established? Are there any laws regarding the wearing of clothes or their sale or manufacture?

What about laws affecting a free press and holding a job? Is food quality governed by some type of health regulations?"

Follow-up: This activity can serve as an excellent pretest and post-test. Given at both the beginning and end of the semester, it can illustrate students' changed awareness about the pervasive nature of the law.

## **Activity #2      THERE OUGHT TO BE A LAW!**

Purpose: "There ought to be a law..." How many times has each of us uttered or thought these words? It is used most often by angry citizens upset over some situation, condition, or practice which they feel could be remedied if only there were a law on the books to deal with it. Any new law must start as an idea.

Method: Write the phrase "There ought to be a law..." on the board. Ask students to complete the sentence by volunteering ideas about their own particular concerns. For example...

... Seatbelts on school buses

... School uniforms

... Year round school

Describe a problem. Do not make one up--use a real one that you have seen in everyday life and feel needs to be corrected. Use a half sheet of paper. Give reasons for how you feel. Use the other half of the sheet of paper to write the law you feel would solve the problem described.

Example: In order to correct the problem of extra shopping carts in the parking lots of big shopping centers, this law would make it mandatory for grocery/drug stores to have the shopping carts cleared from the parking lot every 15 minutes. This would prevent accidents and would end the "runaway" cart problem. Failure to keep parking lots cleared of shopping carts would result in a fine of \$50 for each time it is reported. Additional fines would mean the grocery/drug store would be in danger of losing its license to operate.

\*Be sure you describe the consequences of not obeying the law.

\*Make sure the consequences are reasonable and fit the law.

## MIND WALK HANDOUT

Directions: Next to every daily activity, please make the following notations:

Place an "X" in either the YES or NO spaces if you feel that the law (as you understand that term) does or does not affect that particular activity. If your response is YES, complete the next blank spaces by stating HOW the law affects that activity.

Use a pencil. (You may wish to change your answers later)

### ANY LEGAL IMPACT?

ACTIVITY	YES	NO	HOW?
1. wake up/turn on light	X		electricity rates and regulations
2. wash your face		X	water rates, purity standards
3. get dressed	X		nudity laws, clothing regulations
4. eat breakfast	X		food-FDA, packaging standards
5. read the newspaper	X		free press
6. get in your car	X		traffic laws
7. drive to school	X		traffic laws
8. buy lunch in the cafeteria		X	health and safety regulations, FDA
9. stop in furniture store, and purchase sofa on credit.	X		credit laws, truth-in-lending laws banking laws/money
10. pick up your paycheck, go to bank, and deposit part of the check.	X		taxes, banking laws
11. stop at supermarket, buy roast, canned fruit,	X		meat inspection/FDA, pesticides on fresh

fruits and vegetables, and milk.		produce, dairy products regulated
12. pick up prescription.	X	FDA drug laws
13. go home, discover you have no heat. Call landlord.	X	landlord/tenant laws
14. turn on TV and watch while eating dinner.	X	Federal Communications Commission rules/laws/ Free press, safety laws on appliances
17. turn out lights	X	electricity rates and regulations